

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, January 8, 2007

(Jackson, Mississippi) -- Governor Haley Barbour today provided additional information about the state's Alternative Housing Pilot Program, which the Federal Emergency Management Agency approved for funding last week.

In October, the State of Mississippi made application to FEMA for funding of the Alternative Housing Pilot Program.

FEMA approved Mississippi's application, which seeks to replace some FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes with more sustainable, livable units. Specifically, FEMA plans to allocate more than \$280 million to fund Mississippi's proposal, which includes three housing models -- Park Models, Mississippi Cottages, and Green Mobile units.

The housing models are designed as direct replacements for some FEMA travel trailers and mobile homes. The Park Model design is similar in size and shape to travel trailers currently in use, but has several amenities and design features that create a more livable environment. The Green Mobile unit is sized similar to the Park Model unit, but is designed to maximize energy efficiency and increase affordability. The Green Mobile utilizes daylight and natural ventilation, durable materials that significantly reduce the need for the electrical heating and cooling of the unit, and site design features that orient the building relative to solar heating and prevailing winds.

The Mississippi Cottage -- a larger unit -- shares some similarities with what has been termed the "Katrina Cottage," but has several design differences that were created during the state's design charrette for the Alternative Housing Pilot Program.

During the charrette, the state collaborated with an expert team of architects and organizations including the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the College of Architecture, Art and Design at Mississippi State University, the Federation of American Scientists, and the architectural firm Looney Ricks Kiss.

(Suggest Quote from the Governor Here) "I am delighted that a panel of experts assembled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency recognized the merits of Mississippi's proposal for alternative ways of meeting emergency housing needs and allocated more than \$280 million to Mississippi for this project. We will be able to use the much-needed funding provided by Congress to develop safer and more livable emergency housing for thousands of Mississippians who have endured so much over the last year since the worst natural disaster in American history struck our coast."

Selection criteria are currently being established for Mississippi Gulf Coast residents interested in replacing their FEMA travel trailer or mobile home with an approved Green Mobile unit, Mississippi Cottage or Park Model. Once the selection criteria has been created, current temporary housing tenants will be notified through mailouts, flyers, public meetings and the use of multiple media channels. Announcements will also be posted on www.governorbarbour.com/recovery.

Potential recipients must have been residents of Hancock, Harrison or Jackson counties at the time Hurricane Katrina struck and must currently reside in FEMA-provided emergency housing. Their FEMA-provided housing unit must be currently located in Hancock, Harrison or Jackson counties.

The Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal will soon mail letters seeking input from those currently living in FEMA-provided emergency housing. These letters will gauge the tenant's level of interest in obtaining an alternative housing unit as a replacement to their current emergency housing unit. The letter will also note where and when public meetings will be held to describe the program in more detail.

After initial steps are complete, tenant eligibility will be determined through an application and intake interview process. Participation in the Alternative Housing Program will be strictly voluntary.

Companies interested in competing to build the housing units will have the opportunity to make proposals. All contractors for the project will be chosen on a competitive basis.

"The progress Mississippi has made to date in recovery, and therefore, our readiness to implement our proposals uniquely qualifies us for this pilot project," said Gavin Smith, director of the Governor's Office of Recovery and Renewal. "We developed the original design concept of alternative emergency housing following Hurricane Katrina. This project represents part of a long-term effort on behalf of the state to systematically address emergency housing needs."

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina, the State of Mississippi led the movement to find a more suitable replacement for travel trailers. The first alternative housing designs were created at the Mississippi Renewal Forum, convened by the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal in October 2005. The cottage design produced at the forum generated substantial interest from around the country on the issue of disaster emergency housing.

Since that time, the State of Mississippi has actively pursued the issue of replacing travel trailers for its residents. In June, U.S. Senator Thad Cochran successfully proposed the allocation of funds to support alternative temporary housing solutions.

The Green Mobile, Mississippi Cottage and Park Model proposals, all of which have been approved for funding, can be viewed online at <http://www.governorbarbour.com/recovery/alternativehousing.htm>